mortality

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/34010239.

Rating:
General Audiences

Archive Warning:
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Category:
Gen

Fandoms:
Sonic the Hedgehog - All Media Types, Sonic the Hedgehog: The Movie (1996)

Relationship:
Metal Sonic & Sonic the Hedgehog

Characters:
Metal Sonic, Sonic the Hedgehog, Miles "Tails" Prower, Cream the Rabbit

Additional Tags:
Existentialism, Telepathy, short chapters ig, Alternate Ending, Post-Canon, just pretend sonic saved metal, they are buddies. they are buddies!!!, you could interpret it as romantic if you want, but i think they just have a weird intense bond, soft stuff

Language:
English

Stats:
Published: 2021-09-21 Completed: 2021-10-01 Words: 3,762 Chapters: 4/4

mortality

by bufula

Summary

Metal’s optics locked on the sky that boundlessly loomed over him- it was incomprehensibly more vast than he could’ve imagined it to be. It was everywhere.

The sky was everything he could see.

The boy beside him said nothing.

His loathsome copy. His merciful hero. His own self. His complete opposite.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Perhaps nothing terrified Metal more than the looming threat of being deemed obsolete. Outdated. Replaced.

So he waited. When left unplugged for too long, when motor functions fail from the excruciating heat of magma, even when dragged away to an unfamiliar workshop in the weeks that followed, he was fully conscious- *waiting* to be dismantled and thrown away.

His optic sensors were shattered. Parts of his body, entirely melted and scorched away. His circuitry partially fried, gaps in his memory leaving him with little more than remembrance than reaching out, clasping another hand, and a scream that pierced the air. Memories he couldn't be entirely sure were even *his,* if he was still neurologically interlocked with his organic counterpart.

And after that, nothing. Darkness enveloped him. He recognized the kit's voice from time to time, enough to gather that he was hooked up to a tank of some sort, the sensations of wires running up his body uncomfortable to say the least.

At some point, for a split second, everything went completely offline, right before his eyes shot open. He could see. He could hear.

He had been… repaired. Repaired? By the enemy, did they override his code? Alter him somehow? He couldn't detect any changes in his software but still, machines can be edited and made obedient to anyone with the right tools to do so-

"G'morning sunshine!"

"Sonic! Don't instigate him! I just rebooted everything… his new hardware should be operative."

"Can you hear us?"

…

Auto diagnostic screening initiated.

Sensory: functional.

Motor: functional.

Artificial Intelligence: functional.

Systems operational.

Metal's red, pixelated facial screen blinked to life slowly. He was… opening his eyes.

His surroundings were crude, almost cute compared to Robotnik's sterile silver lab. A little workshop, belonging to the fox that stood before him. Tools scattered across the floor and spare parts left on the workbench.

Inviting, almost, compared to the cruel steel from which he was born.

"I feel him! I feel him!"

A voice he recognized. The hero, his antithesis and savior. He felt him in return, sparks of excitement and relief bursting from his circuits- certainly not his own emotions, but the other's linked to his.

You saved me?

I couldn't let you die.

Perhaps Metal was grateful for the artificial connections they shared, as his lack of speech capabilities was rather frustrating. The fox accompanying Sonic, however, could not understand and tilted his head at their wordless exchange. “Should we dismantle him? What if he attacks us again?” He wrought his hands awkwardly.

“I thought you said you reset his directives from Robotnik?”

“I did. He has total free will. He could still kill us if he wanted.”

Free will?

Yep. Tails here set ya free, dude. He’s a real genius.

An overwhelming emotion consumed him, one he could not identify but urged him to break out and run, speed away as far as he could. Sonic must have sensed it, as he reached out to place a hand on Metal’s.

You don’t owe the doctor anything. You don’t owe us anything. You can do whatever you want, alright? Just don’t hurt people.

I hurt you.

Yes- you did.

“Will you two stop that?” Tails sighed, growing restless. “It’s freaking me out. I can give you a voice box, Metal, if you’d like.”

The android considered it for a moment, but thought better of it. The only one who needed to hear him was his complement, he thought, shaking his head no.

“… Alright. I’m- I’m gonna release you-“

Before Tails could finish tentatively removing the wiring from his chassis, a rush of hot air filled the boy’s faces as Metal pounced off, activating his jet pack and blasting through the roof like it was paper, away into the daylight.

Shock and concern ran through him like a current, quickly identifying it as the other’s reaction to him quite literally leaving them in the dust.

He brushed away the thoughts of the hero that mixed with his own, instead focusing on his balance- gaining altitude so quickly could fail his newly repaired systems.

His limbs, he realized, were lighter than before. Replaced with slim cobalt bearings, identical but no doubt replacing his components that had melted away from the volcano. In place of clunky metal replicas, red sneakers adorned his feet now, hip looking shoes that reached his ankles.

Something told him Sonic picked them out.

Doing his best to tune out his counterpart's brainwaves, he grazed over the Land of Sky, for the first time simply gliding for the sake of doing so. The sun was warm on his back, and he opened his solar panels before landing gently in a field of white flowers, a cloud of petals that stretched forever.

Sinking gently into the dirt, Metal dragged his claws over a flower stem, severing it. The little organic thing so tiny and soft in his cold grip.

He became acutely aware of every little petal and leaf around him, swaying in the wind and crushed beneath him.

Perhaps if he lie still long enough, he shall rust and become obsolete on his own. There is no use for him, replaced before he was even created by a living, breathing body.

Motionless, he lie there for hours.

Even after his solar arrays had fully charged, he could not pry himself from the earthen bed. Metal's optics locked on the sky that boundlessly loomed over him- it was incomprehensibly more vast than he could've imagined it to be. It was everywhere.

The sky was everything he could see.

His processing power was not meant for existential contemplation, he realized, as his senses whirred delicately. His software was that of a tool, a weapon- an inanimate object not designed for the luxury of free thought.

He had only existed in a conscious state for perhaps a few days now. Defective almost immediately.

Again, he sunk those steel digits into the dirt as if to clutch the planet close to him, cold metal against warm grass. He was afraid he might drain the very life from it.

A rustling behind him snapped him from the thought.

You look rather peaceful.

Metal did not shift his body, still plastered to the flower bed on his back, but those red eyes flicked to meet jade ones.

His loathsome copy. His merciful hero. His own self. His complete opposite.

Sonic. How did you…

Find you? Easy man. C'mon, we're linked. You've been out here all day though, I wanted to give you some privacy but-

The organic shook his head, sitting beside Metal. "Agh, I'd rather talk. Anyway, Tails and I got worried."

Tails?

"Yeah. The fox."

The android nodded thoughtfully, unable to pinpoint why the violent desire to prove himself, to attack Sonic, had simply vanished. He supposed it had to do with Tails' tinkering, but still- his directive programming tugged at him. A desire for something else now, though what it was, he couldn't begin to understand.

The boy beside him said nothing.

Perhaps nothing needed to be said.

Chapter End Notes

i will prob write some more i am just very fascinated with metal and his relationship to sonic especially how its portrayed in the 90s ova

Chapter 2

Metal did not expect organic life to be as fascinating as it was.

He spent hours crouched against the ground watching bugs crawl. He tuned into radio satellites and listened to the chatter of people and their little songs. He studied the planes and birds that cut through the sky, the patterns they formed. He tried to help Tails cook meals and observed the odd sense of joy that permeates from Sonic at the phrase, “dinner’s ready!”

No matter how fleeting or stupid organic life *objectively* was, they found ways to make meaning, which absolutely astounded him. Just a day earlier he’d attempted to get some answers out of that fox boy- he still lacked a voice chip, but Tails had access to his software and discovered he could run programs to see his internal dialogue in the form of jumbled user interface text.

Pleased at the form of communication, Metal tried it out.

<html>

* why do:/or[ganics indulge in?.so much)0meaningless activit_ty t and emotion>? *

</html>

The kit scanned the text that slowly rendered on his screen, turning to face Metal with an endearing grin. A look of satisfaction and pride that emerged when something worked, when tireless research and trial and error had paid off in the success of some new program or invention or whatever. “Whaddya mean?”

<html>

* you.>are a!ll morta%l and evrthing/?&yo&u do will eventua[ly mean nothi ing.*

</html>

“Mmm. You sound like Shadow,” he snickered.

<html>

* wh/o? *

</html>

“Ha! Wouldn’t you two get along swell. Nah, I mean- never mind.” The fox’s gaze became a thoughtful one. “Well… I guess it has to do with our inherent nature… psychologically, our brains are bursting with electrical impulses and chemicals that compel our behavior and emotions. But- I can’t really place a scientific explanation to this- there’s something *more,* I think… we just feel things… and do things, with and for the people around us…”

Metal became frustrated at the notion that not everything could be explained, emitting a series of beeps and whirs that Tails quickly looked to translate. A simple word appeared.

<html>

* why *

</html>

“Isn’t that the big question,” the boy mumbled, far more to himself than the robot.

He decided organics were not very intelligent, if not even they could understand themselves.

And again, his directive programming stirred in his circuitry- the files had been wiped of Robotnik’s nuisances, yet *something* still tugged at him there.

It did not subside with the passage of time.

Sonic?

… His counterpart lie on the couch, clicking away at some handheld game absentmindedly. Sonic hummed out loud in reply, not bothering to glance in Metal’s direction. He stood in the kitchen beside Tails, adjacent to the living room enough that they could speak one sidedly.

Could you ask Tails if he wants the carrots chopped, or diced? I lack communication abilities with him currently as he can only intercept my thoughts when he is accessing his computer, which he cannot do at the moment because he is-

“TAILS! D’ya want Mets to chop the carrots or dice em or what?” The blue bur had a naturally projecting voice sometimes.

“Ah- well this is gonna be soup, so don’t cut them too thin or they’ll get weird an’ all soggy and stuff. Thanks, dude,” the fox replied, a mere few feet away preparing a broth over the stove. “Gee it’d be NICE if a certain ORGANIC HEDGEHOG helped me out with cooking like this!” He called over his shoulder to a snickering Sonic.

That will suffice. Thank you.

Yeah, yeah, don’t mention it. Ya sure you don’t want a voice box?

Affirmative. This system of communication operates perfectly.

Sonic begged to differ. In the few weeks since Metal had taken to spending nights exploring the city and the wilderness, and days with the boys who had rescued him, he *still* insisted he didn’t need a proper voice.

Admittedly, it was out of fear he might not like the sound of an artificial voice. He liked the softer, varying tones that tongues and mouths mysteriously produced. The flat static of Robotnik’s other creations that had been granted speech capabilities did not appeal to him in the slightest.

And curiously it was not the first time he found himself trying to escape his own robotic nature. His claws might’ve made handy kitchen knives, but he could not pet stray cats without hurting them, could not pick flowers without tearing up their blooms. His optics provided superior visuals to organic eyes, but long gazes into the mirror proved uncomfortable. They lacked expression and depth. He could not smile or even just soften the permanent glare he possessed.

The more time he spent with in the outside world the more he felt he did not belong. Machinery designed simply to function for and not partake in such a futile mortality, a desire- a purpose.

“Hey… Mets?”

Metal tilted his head at Sonic, who was still picking at the bottom of his soup bowl while Tails put away dishes behind them. Even if he didn’t require food, the android found it oddly comforting to sit at the table, like an awkward family.

Yes?

“Is everything alright?”

Yes.

I’m getting… weird brainwaves from you, man. Like you’re stressed or something.

I suppose I am conflicted as of late. Most robots have a clear directive that provides their existence with purpose, but I no longer have such. I am grateful for this, but I do not understand how organics find meaning in themselves without a directive. I wish to seek a purpose the way living things do.

Sonic blinked at him with wide eyes for a moment before turning his gaze to Tails, who was struggling to reach the kitchen shelf where mugs were kept. The fox did not like to fly in the house- instead leaping up on the counter and clambering to put away dishes and cups from his angle.

There’s no such thing as purpose, I think.

The pair watched Tails in silence. And despite Metal’s limited understanding of emotions, the gleam in Sonic’s eyes as he gazed at the kit was unmistakably love.

He hoped he might feel that too one day.

Chapter 3

Purpose was very different from a directive.

According to Sonic, people didn't need to latch onto a guiding desire or "thing" as he called it- simply living was enough. "Go with the flow," he said often. This did not satisfy Metal, but neither did Tails' answers.

His internal dictionary was little help. "The reason for which something exists." If that was true, his purpose would be to kill his counterpart, something he very much would rather not do- he decided so when the word "friend" occurred to him each time he saw him.

Love perplexed him just as much. He first recognized it between the brothers, but watching television and overhearing Amy's calls lead him to the conclusion that different kinds of love existed. Love between comrades. Love between blood. Love between two people, a certain kind he could not articulate but the concept of which intrigued him thoroughly.

Perhaps love was a purpose? It certainly seemed to be Sonic's defining guidance, a reason for his existence. The hero was brimming with love for the planet, the sky, the people around him, boundless forgiveness and trust, even for Metal himself. Especially for himself, he noticed. He was fond of the touch and warm reassurance.

"Metal? Can robots kiss people?" Cream had asked him one day- the boys were supposed to be babysitting her for the afternoon, and she had finally worked up the confidence to talk to the android copy of her idol Sonic.

They were watching a movie- a hero in strange pants and a princess in a dress, one a boy and the other a girl, and they had put their mouths together awkwardly, a profoundly ridiculous display of that third category of love Metal couldn't describe.

The rabbit had called it a romance.

He turned to the girl and tilted his head, contemplating for a moment. Logically, he lacked a mouth, which should have made kissing impossible, but he would have liked to think that he could if he

wanted to. He hadn't quite sorted out the details.

Cream met his optics with wide, curious eyes, and he would've sighed if he could.

Metal nodded assuredly. She seemed expectant and he did not wish to disappoint.

Rewarded with a girlish grin, he felt a tugging again as she giggled, pointing to the screen. A desire to make her laugh. A fierce and absolutely sharp instinct to keep this child happy and safe at all costs shot through him.

Mets? Is Cream alright? Me and Tails will be back soon. Sorry for leaving you on babysitting duty… uh, don't tell Vanilla, either.

The concerned voice of his organic half echoed in his head. He and the fox had gone into town for a few hours- something about stray Badniks running around- leaving the robot alone with the bunny. His worrisome demeanor was sweet, admittedly.

Yes. We are watching the Princess Bride. It is quite a good movie.

Ha! Glad to hear it. Be home in a few, alright?

Understood.

He paused.

Sonic?

What's up?

What is the emotion I am currently subjected to called, if you can feel it?

He was met with silence for a moment, and the sensation of another heart inside his chest- the familiar feeling of some sort of synchronization.

Aw. You're secretly a sap, Mets.

What do you mean?

Protectiveness. You feel protective of her.

Metal processed this information, turning to Cream once again. She remained transfixed on the fight scene that seemed comically

inaccurate, but interesting all the same.

I've only been in her presence for a mere four hours but if anyone attempts to inflict harm upon her I shall demolish everyone instantly including myself.

"Oookay, y'think that's a little much, Metal?" A familiar insufferably cheerful voice filled the room as the front door swung open.

"Mr. Sonic! Tails! Come watch the Princess Bride with us!" The bunny eagerly waved them over and the boys were happy to comply.

Sitting beside the trio, Metal finally began to grasp his counterpart's fundamental reason of existence, even if he denied having one.

Like a star surrounded by planets, he was the sun, and their orbit was precious to him.

Chapter 4

As fond as he was of the sun, Metal was utterly captivated by the rain. Water just fell from the sky- streaking every window with patterns of droplets and leaving a dewy blanket over the world.

He had been wandering on the beach when he first became caught in rain. Well aware of his waterproof hardware, he was more intrigued than scared of the phenomenon.

Gently outstretching his hand, the android watched drops begin to form on his claws, the sensation gracing his whole body with a cool, soft tingling. Heavy clouds blocked his beloved sun, but they were intricate in their own way- darker and yet… beautiful.

He decided that, if Sonic was the sun, Metal himself must be the rain.

Sonic. There is water coming from the sky.

His counterpart was not present, but distance did nothing to separate their thoughts.

Oh, yeah- come home dude! It might storm!

A bit of nervousness shot through him- an emotion that did not belong to him.

I will be fine. I am impervious to most liquids and highly temperature resistant.

After a moment, he added a phrase he'd heard from one of Cream's shows. Just for good measure. I *promise.*

Surprise and warmth bled from Sonic's heart and Metal felt satisfied that it had worked.

Ok. Be careful.

A promise, his dictionary indicates, is a strong reassurance one person gives another in deep trust, which he appropriately felt towards the hero.

Amy was home when he returned.

Metal had at first been highly oppositional towards her, as intense discomfort radiated from Sonic whenever she was around- but there was something beneath that too.

When he'd inquired about these mixed emotions, Sonic had simply stated that he cared for her even if she got on his nerves.

Interestingly he did indeed save her from dire situations and often carried her very close to him, though he did not return the romantic feelings. Love, apparently, could be complex and inconsistent between the parties involved.

"Hiiii Metal!" The pink hedgehog had cheerily greeted, cooing over him with a towel as cold water dripped from his chassis. She, like Cream, had grown past the initial wariness of having a robotic copy of her hero around, treating him as a friend.

Or perhaps a little brother, he thought as Amy fussed over his waterlogged shoes getting the carpet all wet.

"Relax, Ames. Not like this place is anything fancy to worry 'bout," Sonic teased. It was true. The abandoned plane crash site was overgrown with flowers and moss, their beds were mere hammocks hung from the inner cabin seats and their living spaces were crude rooms Knuckles had helped build.

Nothing like the uniform city of steel Metal had come from. Organic and soft.

Home, he decided.

Upon observation it could be deducted that Amy simultaneously shared that same familial love with Cream that Sonic felt for his brother Tails. He had watched as she allowed the bunny to lace flowers in her quills and held her gingerly in her lap.

Metal recognized it as what Sonic had called protectiveness. The girls came and went, Vanilla even visited at times, Knuckles, Sonic's self-proclaimed best friend, spent nights often- an odd sort of family. Family, contrary to his dictionary, did not seem to mean blood relation in the slightest.

Once, when the island was empty except for him and his complement, he had tried to express this to him.

The sky was always clear out there in the ocean. The night beamed back at them, cocooning the planet in soft light.

Just as the friends around them enveloped them in a strange sense of trust and comfort.

Your family. They are like the stars.

Sonic propped himself on his elbows to face his counterpart, both splayed out on the wing of the crumbled plane, lost in the sights of the galaxy above them.

“Hm?” His voice was softer than it was in the daytime. Energy replaced with serenity.

You are the sun. It is a star that burns brighter than the rest. The planet is your home. I am the rain and your family is the stars.

“Feelin’ poetic, Mets?”

That is simply how I make sense of it. He paused, considering his words. *I wish to be a part of this. More than anything. I understand you do not feel purpose, but I disagree.*

Is that so?

Metal beeped fondly at Sonic’s words coursing through his mind. He knew the hero loved to talk more than *anything,* but the words in his head were simply meant for him.

Yes. Your love for the people around you and the planet. Your desire to protect them all. That, I have deducted, is what drives you most. I have found that I both wish to protect alongside you, and…

Thoughts swirled about his circuitry. Starlight reflected from his optics.

Sonic said nothing, content to let the wave of calm echo between them, emotions as one. Often they did not need to finish their sentences. Whatever Metal was thinking, it stayed locked between them.

End Notes

kudos and comments r appreciated as always :')

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!